

JUN 18 2010

Application No. 10/731,606
After Final Office Action of March 30, 2010

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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1 (Previously presented). An image forming apparatus in combination with a sheet having one or a plurality of memories, the apparatus comprising:

- an acquisition unit for acquiring an image signal;
- an image forming unit for forming an image based on the image signal acquired by said acquisition unit;
- an encryption key creating unit for creating an encryption key when said acquisition unit acquires the image signal;
- an encrypting unit for encrypting the image signal with the encryption key created by said encryption key creating unit;
- a writing unit for writing the encryption key and the encrypted image signal into the one or a plurality of memories on said sheet;
- a reading unit for reading an encrypted image and encryption key from the sheet; and
- a decryption unit for decrypting the encrypted image using the encryption key read by the reading unit.

2 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 1, wherein the reading unit further comprises:

- an image reading unit for reading the image formed on said sheet having one or a plurality of memories; and
- a memory reading unit for reading the encryption key from the memory when said image reading unit reads the image.

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3 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 1, further comprising an information acquiring/creating unit for acquiring or creating information about the image encrypted with the encryption key,

wherein said writing unit writes the encryption key and the information acquired or created by said information acquiring/creating unit into the same memory, or different memories on said sheet having one or a plurality of memories.

4 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 2,

wherein said memory reading unit reads the encryption key and information about the image encrypted with the encryption key from the same memory, or different memories on said sheet having one or a plurality of memories, when said image reading unit reads the image, and said image forming apparatus further comprises a display unit for displaying the information read by said memory reading unit.

5 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 4, wherein

the information read by said memory reading unit includes the number of times the image based on the decrypted image signal of the read image was formed, and said writing unit writes the number of times obtained by adding one to the number read by said memory reading unit into the same memory or different memory on said sheet having one or a plurality of memories so as to update the number of times.

6 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 5, wherein

said image forming unit forms a number indicating the number of times obtained by adding one to the memory on said sheet having one or a plurality of memories when forming the image based on the decrypted image signal on said sheet having one or a plurality of memories.

7 (Original). The image forming apparatus of claim 6, wherein

said image forming unit forms the number in a visually inconspicuous form within a region where the image is formed.

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8 (Original). The image forming apparatus of claim 5, wherein

the information read by said memory reading unit includes the number of times the image based on the decrypted image signal of the read image was formed and a predetermined numerical value, and said image forming apparatus further comprises: a judging unit for judging whether the number read by said memory reading unit is larger or smaller than the predetermined numerical value; and a prohibiting unit for prohibiting said decrypting unit from decrypting the image signal with the encryption key when said judging unit judges that the number is larger.

9 (Original). The image forming apparatus of claim 4, wherein

the information read by said memory reading unit includes a period, and said image forming apparatus further comprises: a timer; a judging unit for judging whether or not a time shown by said timer is within the period read by said memory reading unit; and a prohibiting unit for prohibiting said decrypting unit from decrypting the image signal with the encryption key when said judging unit judges that the time is within the read period.

10 (Original). The image forming apparatus of claim 4, wherein

the information read by said memory reading unit includes one or a plurality of identifiers of image forming apparatus,

said image forming apparatus further comprises: a storing unit for storing an identifier; and a judging unit for judging whether or not the identifiers read by said memory reading unit include the identifier stored in said storing unit, and

said decrypting unit decrypts the image signal with the encryption key only when said judging unit judges that the read identifies include the stored identifier.

11 (Original). The image forming apparatus of claim 4, wherein

the information read by said memory reading unit includes a code,

said image forming apparatus further comprises: an input unit for inputting a code; and a judging unit for judging whether or not the code inputted by said input unit and the code read by said memory reading unit are identical, and

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said decrypting unit decrypts the image signal with the encryption key only when said judging unit judges that the codes are identical.

12 (Previously presented). An image forming apparatus in combination with a sheet having one or a plurality of memories storing an encryption key, the apparatus including an image reading unit for reading a first image formed on the sheet having one or a plurality of memories storing the encryption key, and an image forming unit for forming a second image on another sheet, based on an image signal of the first image read by said image reading unit, the apparatus further comprising:

a memory reading unit for reading the encryption key from the memory on said sheet having one or a plurality of memories when said image reading unit reads the first image; and

a decrypting unit for decrypting the image signal of the first image read by said image reading unit, with the encryption key read by said memory reading unit,

wherein said image forming unit forms the second image based on the image signal decrypted by said decrypting unit on said another sheet.

13 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 12, wherein

said memory reading unit reads the encryption key and information about the first image encrypted with the encryption key from the same or different memories on said sheet having one or a plurality of memories when said image reading unit reads the first image, and said image forming apparatus further comprises a display unit for displaying the information read by said memory reading unit.

14 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 13, wherein

the information read by said memory reading unit includes the number of times the second image was formed based on the decrypted image signal of the read first image, and said writing unit writes the number of times obtained by adding one to the number read by said memory reading unit into the same memory or different memory on said sheet having one or a plurality of memories so as to update the number of times.

15 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 14, wherein

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said image forming unit forms a number indicating the number of times obtained by adding one to the memory on said sheet having one or a plurality of memories when forming the second image based on the decrypted image signal on said another sheet .

16 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 15, wherein
said image forming unit forms the number in a visually inconspicuous form within a region where the decrypted image is formed.

17 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 14, wherein
the information read by said memory reading unit includes the number of times the second image based on the decrypted image signal of the read first image was formed and a predetermined numerical value, and said image forming apparatus further comprises: a judging unit for judging whether the number read by said memory reading unit is larger or smaller than the predetermined numerical value; and a prohibiting unit for prohibiting said decrypting unit from decrypting the image signal with the encryption key when said judging unit judges that the number is larger.

18 (Original). The image forming apparatus of claim 13, wherein
the information read by said memory reading unit includes a period, and said image forming apparatus further comprises: a timer; a judging unit for judging whether or not a time shown by said timer is within the period read by said memory reading unit; and a prohibiting unit for prohibiting said decrypting unit from decrypting the image signal with the encryption key when said judging unit judges that the time is within the read period.

19 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 13, wherein
the information read by said memory reading unit includes one or a plurality of identifiers of image forming apparatus,
said image forming apparatus further comprises: a storing unit for storing an identifier; and a judging unit for judging whether or not the identifiers read by said memory reading unit include the identifier stored in said storing unit, and

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said decrypting unit decrypts the image signal with the encryption key only when said judging unit judges that the read identifiers include the stored identifier.

20 (Original). The image forming apparatus of claim 13, wherein the information read by said memory reading unit includes a code,

said image forming apparatus further comprises: an input unit for inputting a code; and a judging unit for judging whether or not the code inputted by said input unit and the code read by said memory reading unit are identical, and

said decrypting unit decrypts the image signal with the encryption key only when said judging unit judges that the codes are identical.

21-22. Cancelled.

23. (Previously presented) The image forming apparatus of claim 2, wherein said sheet comprises a first memory containing an encryption key and a second memory containing an encrypted image.

24 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 23, wherein said memory reading unit reads the encryption key and information about the image encrypted with the encryption key from said first memory on said sheet when said image reading unit reads the image, and said image forming apparatus further comprises a display unit for displaying the information read by said memory reading unit.

25 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 24, wherein the information read by said memory reading unit includes the number of times the image based on the decrypted image signal of the read image was formed, and said writing unit writes the number of times obtained by adding one to the number read by said memory reading unit into the first memory on said sheet so as to update said number of times.

26 (Previously presented). The image forming apparatus of claim 25, wherein said image forming unit forms a number indicating the number of times obtained by adding one to the first

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memory on said sheet when forming the image based on the decrypted image signal of the read encrypted image.